HOSEA 14

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB (MT VERSING)
Israel's Future Blessings	Israel Restored at Last	Rebellion and Restoration (12:1-14:9)	Hosea's Plea to Israel	The Inevitability of Ruin (13:12-14:1)
14:1-3 (1-3)	14:1-3 (1-3)	14:1-3 (1-3)	14:1-3	The Sincere Conversion of Israel to Yahweh
			The Lord Promises New Life for Israel	14:2-9 (2-4)
14:4-7 (4-7)	14:4-7 (4-7)	14:4-7 (4-7)	14:4-8 (4-8)	
				(5-9)
14:8 (8)	14:8 (8)	14:8-9 (8-9)	Conclusion	
14:9 (9)	14:9 (9)		14:9	Concluding Admonition
				14:10 (10)

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 14:1-3

[1]Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God,
For you have stumbled because of your iniquity.
[2]Take words with you and return to the LORD.
Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity
And receive *us* graciously,
That we may present the fruit of our lips.
[3]"Assyria will not save us,
We will not ride on horses;
Nor will we say again, 'Our god,'
To the work of our hands;
For in You the orphan finds mercy."

14:1 "Return" This (BDB 996, KB 1427) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. "Return" is a recurrent theme in Hosea (e.g., Hos. 3:5; 5:4; 6:1; 7:10,16; 11:5; 12:6; 14:1-2). True repentance brings physical and spiritual benefits! Remember that repentance is related to personal relationship (i.e., "return to the LORD your God," e.g., Hos. 2:13; 4:6; 8:14; 13:6; Amos 4:6,9,10,11) as much as it is to rules!

SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE (OT)

▣ **"stumbled"** The OT metaphor of footing is used to describe the spiritual life. Sure footing is a sign of a healthy spiritual life, while stumbling (BDB 505, KB 502, *Qal* PERFECT) is a sign of sin (cf. Hos. 5:5b; Isa. 3:8; 59:10,14; Jer. 46:6).

14:2 "Take words with you and return to the LORD" This sentence (Hos. 14:1 in MT) has four *Qal* IMPERATIVES and one *Piel* COHORTATIVE. God demands that they respond appropriately!

1. "take" – BDB 542, KB 534
2. "return" – BDB 996, KB 1427
3. "say" – BDB 55, KB 65
4. "present" – BDB 1022, KB 1522 (*Piel* COHORTATIVE)

Notice the repetition of "take." If Israel will truly repent then God will completely accept and restore them!

This refers to the sacrificial system (i.e., MT "our lips as bulls"). To better understand this phrase we should add "take words not lambs." This affirms the proper restoration of Mosaic sacrifice.

The NET Bible, p. 1578, #10, has a good insight into the repeated use of the VERB (BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE.

1. take your confession to YHWH, v. 2a
2. He will take away all your iniquity

Oh, the power of repentance and Oh, the matchless, unchanging mercy of YHWH!

▣ **"Take away all iniquity"** The VERB (BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is surrounded by IMPERATIVES. This phrase occurs several times (7) in the OT with God as its subject (cf. Exod. 34:7; Num. 14:18; Ps. 32:5; 85:2; Isa. 33:24; Hosea 14:2; Micah 7:18) and always means "remove iniquity" (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 162). It is a plea from truly repentant covenant people.

▣

NASB, NKJV	**"And receive *us* graciously"**
NRSV, JPSOA	**"accept that which is good"**

TEV	**"accept our prayers"**
NJB, REB	**"accept our wealth"**
LXX	**"you receive good things"**
Peshitta	**"receive blessings"**

What does the *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE (BDB 373 I), used as an ADVERB mean in this context? The root has several usages.

1. KB 370 I – good, merry, pleasant, desirable
2. KB 371 II – perfume (i.e., good smelling)
3. KB 371 III – an Aramean state
4. KB 371 IV – word, speech, prayer (i.e., related to *Qal* IMPERATIVE, "take," which is an IMPERATIVE OF REQUEST
5. KB 373 – good things, prosperity, blessings, well-being

Number 4 is found only here but seems to fit the context best.

▣

NASB	**"That we may present the fruit of our lips"**
NKJV	**"For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips"**
NKJV (footnote)	**"For we will offer the bull calves of our lips"**
NRSV	**"and we will offer the fruit of our lips"**
TEV	**"and we will praise you as we have promised"**
Peshitta	**"then he will recompense you for the prayer of your lips"**
NJB	**"instead of bulls we will dedicate to you our lips"**
REB	**"we shall pay our vows with cattle from our pens"**
NET Bible	**"that we may offer the praise of our lips as sacrificial bulls"**

The VERB (BDB 1022, KB 1532, *Piel* COHORTATIVE) basically means "to complete," here to pay a vow (e.g., 2 Sam. 15:7; Ps. 50:14; 66:13; 116:14,18; Isa. 19:21). This refers to confession, prayer, and praise. This passage is used by modern Judaism to rationalize the place of prayer as a substitute for sacrifice (cf. Ps. 50; 69:30-31).

The above translation and interpretation, so popular among Jewish sources, reflects the Septuagint. The MT reads, "offer bulls" (UBS Text Project, p. 269, gives the MT a "B" rating). The Hebrew is uncertain and the context must fill in the necessary gaps! In context this would refer to

1. prayer (LXX)
2. worship of bull calves (MT)

14:3 "Assyria will not save us" In this verse there are allusions to political alliances and the things that human leaders tend to trust:

1. foreign alliances (Assyria's treaties, cf. Hos. 5:13)
2. military power (Egyptian horses, cf. Ps. 20:7)
3. idols ("work of our hands," i.e., Canaanite fertility gods)

▣ **"To the work of our hands"** Hosea ridicules idolatry in Hos. 4:12; 14:3; Isaiah in Hos. 2:18,20; 17:7-9; 31:7; and Jeremiah in Hos. 10:3-5,8-9,14-15. This attitude reflects Exod. 20:4-5; 34:17; Lev. 19:4; 26:1; Deut. 4:15-19,25; 5:8.

▣ **"For in You the orphan finds mercy"** God is again depicted as a merciful parent as in Hos. 11:1-4 (cf. Ps. 68:5; Lam. 5:3). The orphan represents the powerless and vulnerable people of society. God's people should care for these kinds of people (e.g., Exod. 22:21-24; Deut. 10:18-19; 14:29; 16:11-12; 24:17,19; 26:12-13; 27:19).

The VERB "finds mercy" (BDB 933, KB 1216, *Pual* IMPERFECT) is the same as one of Hosea's children (negated) in Hos. 1:6; 2:4, but mercy is restored in Hos. 2:1,19,23 and here! This is a covenant term like "My people" (cf. Hos. 1:9 vs. 2:1).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 14:4-7

4I will heal their apostasy,
I will love them freely,
For My anger has turned away from them.
5I will be like the dew to Israel;
He will blossom like the lily,
And he will take root like *the cedars of* Lebanon.
6His shoots will sprout,
And his beauty will be like the olive tree
And his fragrance like *the cedars of* Lebanon.
7Those who live in his shadow
Will again raise grain,
And they will blossom like the vine.
His renown *will be* like the wine of Lebanon.

14:4 "I will heal their apostasy" In verses 4-8 God speaks! The VERB (BDB 950, KB 1272) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT. Healing is an OT metaphor for forgiveness (cf. Hos. 5:13; 6:1; 7:1; 11:3; Ps. 103:3; Isa. 57:18; Jer. 3:22).

The term "apostasy" (BDB 1000) is literally "turning back" (cf. Hos. 11:7). It is used in Jeremiah for turning away from YHWH (cf. Jer. 2:19; 3:22; 5:6; 8:5; 14:7; Judah is called faithless in Hos. 3:6,8,11,14; also notice 7:24). If Israel "turns back" (i.e., repents) from sin (cf. Hos. 14:1) YHWH will "heal their turning back" (i.e., apostasy) tendencies! His anger has "turned away from them" (cf. Deut. 30:1-10). Notice the series of word plays on *shub* (BDB 996).

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEALING

SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY (*aphistēmi*)

▣ **"I will love them freely"** This VERB (BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is parallel to heal in line 1. Grace (God's unchanging character), not merit (humans ever-changing heart and motives), is the key to the new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38). However, an initial and ongoing response is demanded, not only repentance and faith (cf. Deut. 30; Mark 1:15; Acts 2:21), but also obedience (cf. Luke 6:46) and perseverance (cf. Revelation 2-3).

▣ **"My anger has turned away from them"** The term "anger" (BDB 60) is from "nose" or "face." Anger can be seen in a red face and hard breathing. Here is an anthropomorphism for God's deep feelings.

There is a play on the word "turn back" or "return" (BDB 996) in this context:

1. return, Hos. 14:1
2. return to, Hos. 14:2
3. turn away, Hos. 14:4
4. also in Hos. 14:7

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE USED TO DESCRIBE GOD

14:5 "the dew" Dew (literal here, not like 6:4; 13:3) is the only source of moisture in Israel between the two rainy periods and is crucial for crops to mature. Verses 5-7 describe the agricultural signs of God's blessings (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28).

There is a series of JUSSIVES in Hos. 14:5-6:

1. "blossom," Hos. 14:5 – BDB 827, KB 965, *Qal* IMPERFECT – JUSSIVE in meaning
2. "will stake its roots," Hos. 14:5 (i.e., will take root) – BDB 645, KB 697, *Qal* JUSSIVE
3. "sprout" (lit. "go"), Hos. 14:6 – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT – JUSSIVE in meaning
4. "will be" – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE

▣ **"Lebanon"** This is the land north of Israel called Phoenicia, whose capital is Tyre. It was famous for its trees. In this context

1. trees, Hos. 14:5 (parallel to city)
2. trees, Hos. 14:6 (parallel to olive trees)
3. wine, Hos. 14:7 (parallel to vine)

In context, this may be a veiled reference to Ba'al, who Jezebel from Tyre, brought into Israel. The fertility of Lebanon was from YHWH, not Ba'al (cf. Hos. 14:8).

14:6-7 "olive tree. . .grain. . .vine" The three main crops of Palestine are olive oil, grains, and grapes. YHWH gave them this fertile land (e.g., Deut. 8:7-9; 11:9-12). These were from YHWH, not Ba'al! The restoration of God's people to the land flowing with milk and honey is described as agricultural abundance (cf. Amos 9:13-15), but in reality it is the intimacy of the interpersonal relationship that is the greatest joy of a restored and renewed people/family!

14:7 "Those who live in his shadow" The VERB (BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* PERFECT) means to sit or to dwell. This is a metaphor of

1. God as a mother bird who protects her young under her wings (cf. Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 63:7; Matt. 23:27)
2. because of the agricultural context of Hos. 14:5-7 and 8, this probably refers to God as a provider of a fruitful tree (cf. Hos. 14:8; Ezek. 17:22-24)

It is YHWH, not Ba'al, who is the source of fertility and stability (cf. Hos. 14:8).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHADOW AS A METAPHOR FOR PROTECTION AND CARE

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 14:8-9

[8]O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols?
It is I who answer and look after you.
I am like a luxuriant cypress;
From Me comes your fruit.
[9]Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;
***Whoever* is discerning, let him know them.**
For the ways of the LORD are right,
And the righteous will walk in them,
But transgressors will stumble in them.

14:8 "what more have I to do with idols" This is a Hebrew idiom of rejection (e.g., Jdgs. 11:12; 2 Sam. 16:10; 19:22; 1 Kgs. 17:18; 2 Kgs. 3:13; 2 Chr. 35:21; John 2:4).

▣ **"It is I who answer"** Idols cannot answer, but YHWH can. This same VERB (BDB 772, KB 851) is used repeatedly in Hos. 2:21-22, which sets the stage for the great promise of Hos. 2:23!

▣ **"and look after you"** This VERB (BDB 1003 II, KB 1449, *Qal* IMPERFECT) has the connotation of "regard with watchful care," (root "to bend down to look at").

This same VERB is used in Hos. 13:7 with the connotation of "lie in wait to ambush" (cf. Jer. 5:26). Context is determinative!

The God of Israel is alive and attentive, while the gods of Canaan are lifeless idols of wood and metal who cannot see, hear, speak, move, or help!

▣ **"I am like a luxuriant cypress"** This is the only place in the OT that God is described as a tree.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN LANGUAGE

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHADOW AS A METAPHOR FOR PROTECTION AND CARE

▣ **"From Me comes your fruit"** YHWH, not Ba'al, is the source of blessing. What a tragedy when God's people do not know this truth.

14:9 This is a wisdom proverb much like the book of Revelation, "Let him who has an ear hear." The VERBS "understand" (BDB 106, KB 619) and "discern" (BDB 106, KB 122) are both JUSSIVES (the second in meaning, but not form). Hosea must be read more than once and enacted!

▣ **"Whoever"** This closing wisdom saying focuses on an individual (not corporate) response to Hosea's teaching. The nation was unable to repent, but individuals can respond to God's love appropriately! Choice is an individual covenantal concept (cf. Ezek. 18). We are responsible individually because we must respond to God individually.

Notice the two admonitions related to wisdom.

1. let him understand these things – BDB 106, KB 122, *Qal* JUSSIVE
2. let him know then – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

▣ **"the ways. . .walk. . .stumble"** Here are three terms that describe the life of faith in metaphors of physical walking (e.g., Prov. 23:19). This reflects OT Wisdom Literature's "the two ways": choose God, walk in Him and live or choose sin and walk in it (cf. Deut. 30:15-20; Rom. 8:4-5). The early church was originally called "the Way" in Acts. Biblical faith is a lifestyle. Eternal life has observable characteristics.

▣ **"right. . .righteous"** The Hebrew root is a "straight edge." Today we would say a "ruler." Therefore, all Hebrew words for "sin" refer to a deviation from this standard. The standard is God Himself!

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 13 AND 14

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Was Hosea against the concept of monarchy?
2. Why does Paul quote Hos. 13:14 in 1 Cor. 15?
3. Describe the literary metaphors used in Hos. 14:9.
4. What two metaphors does Hosea use to describe God?
5. What is the central theme of the book?

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